

Snow Shoveling

With all this winter weather suddenly thrust upon us, take extra with activities such as snow shoveling.

Shoveling snow can be good form of exercise. Exercise experts say shoveling heavy snow requires as much energy as running 9 miles per hour!

It can also be dangerous for optimistic shovelers who take on more than they can handle. In addition, breathing cold air, and being exposed to the cold all make the heart work harder. The National Safety Council offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shoveling:

- Individuals over the age of 40, or those who are relatively inactive and overweight, should be especially careful.
- If you have a history of heart trouble, do not shovel without a doctor's permission.
- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow! Shoveling (like lifting weights) can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically, so pace yourself. Be sure to stretch out and warm up before taking on the task.
- Shovel only fresh snow. Freshly fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel than the wet, packed-down variety.
- Push the snow as you shovel. It's easier on your back than lifting the snow out of the way.
- Don't pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel, or fill only one-fourth or one-half of a large one.
- Lift with your legs bent, not your back. Keep your back straight. By bending and "sitting" into the movement, you'll keep your spine upright and less stressed. Your shoulders, torso and thighs can do the work for you.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately. Pace yourself taking frequent rest breaks.
- Dress warmly. Remember that extremities, such as the nose, ears, hands and feet, need extra attention during winter's cold. Wear a turtleneck sweater, cap, scarf, face protection, mittens, wool socks and waterproof boots.